764 perhaps to indicate that they had become the spouses of Death itself. It is probable, therefore, that
775 the Irish practice of providing, as well as the habit, a normal type of new suit for the dead, is but
292 an extension of the burial of clothes with the corpse itself. The fact that it is pagan in its origin, yet is still carried out by devout Catholics in a parish like Tuosist, who wear the clothes for the dead at Mass on three Sundays after the death has taken place, shows both the tenacity of pre-Christian ideas concerning the afterworld and the easy way in which Pagan ideas and practices were in this, as in many other cases, clothed over with Christian raiment. Indeed, it is possible that the Church itself, may have been instrumental in getting the Catholics under their care to wear the clothes to Mass for a certain number of Sundays with the intention of reminding the congregation of the person who had died and of getting them to pray for his soul.

764 Stories about the displeasure and even the sufferings of the dead whenever the custom of wear-
292 ing special clothes for them was not properly carried out are legion in the areas where the practice was known. I have already mentioned some of the traditional rules which had to be observed in the making and the wearing of the suit. Disregard of any or all of these was believed to give offence to the dead, and the reaction of the deceased to such indifference or carelessness on the part of the living relatives forms the basis of most of the stories. A few examples will illustrate their trend.

764 A man whom I knew well died in Tuosist about thirty years ago. A cousin of his was asked to
787 wear the clothes for the dead man on the three Sundays after his burial, and he agreed to do so.
292 During the week after the first Sunday (on which day the suit was first worn to Mass), a friend of mine, a shoemaker in the district, told me that he had a very vivid dream. He dreamt that he was making his way home along a lonely by-road late at night, and at a certain place, where the dead man had often stacked turf, he saw the dead man sitting with his back to the fence at the roadside. The moon shone down on his face and the shoemaker had no difficulty in recognising him in the dream. Plucking up courage, he saluted the dead man.

"Good night, Dan," said the shoemaker.

"Good night, Tim," was the reply.

"How are you?" asked the shoemaker, knowing that he was dead.

"I'm all right, except for one thing," said the dead man. "They gave me a fine suit and a fine shirt and a fine hat"—and he indicated each garment in turn—"but look at the boots they gave me!" And he pointed at the tattered boots on his feet.

"I'll attend to that, Dan," said the shoemaker, and he bade the other good night and made his way home, very much frightened.

Next morning he awoke with vivid recollections of the strange dream he had had during the night. It was Sunday morning, so he knew that the dead man's cousin would be wearing the clothes for the deceased at Mass for the second time that day. The church was four miles from his home, and having walked the mountainous road to Mass, he joined the congregation at the cross-roads afterwards. Without saying anything to anybody concerning his dream, he kept on the look-out for the dead man's cousin, and when he saw him, the shoemaker went over to join the group of men who were chatting with him. The shoemaker quietly concentrated his attention on the boots which the cousin was wearing, and it did not take long to establish that they

were not new, but had, in fact, been made by the shoemaker himself for the dead man, who had worn them only once before his death. The dead man's wife had apparently thought that it was not necessary to order a new pair of boots to be made. The shoemaker had, however, promised the dead man to have the matter set right, so he quietly sent a message to the dead man's wife next day about his dream. She immediately ordered a new pair of shoes to be procured, and these were worn at Mass, along with the rest of the outfit, until the traditional rule had been fully observed.

764 787 292

A friend of mine in the parish of Clanlawrence in County Cork told me the following story to illustrate how carefully the details of the practice must be observed. A woman in that parish had a son who died. She got a new suit made for him, to be worn at Mass on the three Sundays after his burial, and on the Saturday evening prior to the first Sunday she laid the suit (as Mrs. Healy had done when my uncle had died) on the back of a chair in the kitchen, sprinkled it with holy water, and called on the dead son to come for them. Having next placed them at the threshold of the kitchen, she finally left them for a short while in the yard, and sat by the fire for a moment, presumably to allow the dead son to come for the suit. Suddenly she heard something being thrown against the door and, on investigating, she found that it was the new waistcoat. She then remembered that she had deliberately refrained from putting her dead son's watch in the pocket, intending to keep it as a memento. Needless to say, she immediately put the watch in the waistcoat pocket and replaced the garment on the chair in the yard. There was no further disturbance.[1]

764 294 293

[1] For general references to the custom mentioned in 1, see: När Döden Gästar, Louise Hagberg, Stockholm, 1937, pp. 331–379. Also, Über Krankheit, Tod und Jenseitsvorstellungen in Irland, Hans Hartmann, Halle, 1942, pp. 11–115; and Der Totenkult in Irland, by the same author, Heidelberg, 1952, pp. 15–17, 183.

[113]

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
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814 is likely to succeed in collecting much. Fortunately there is a [609] resident (the Rev. P. A. O'Reilly), who is engaged in collecting the old Irish songs of the district, several of which he has already published. As to the legends, many of these have been recorded by C. O. and Mr. Knight, to whose works the reader is referred.

The following notes, mainly dealing with what may be termed minor folk-lore, were some of them obtained from fishermen and others of the natives, but mainly through the kindness of several residents, some of whom desired that their names should not be mentioned.

115 814 1. *Customs and Beliefs.*—For the majority of the notes on these I am indebted to the kindness of Mr. J. A. Nolan, of Belmullet, who, being a native of the district, and personally acquainted with nearly everyone in it, has an exceptionally large knowledge of the subject; for a large part of what remains I have also to thank Messrs. F. C. Wallace, D.I. R.I.C., Belmullet, and P. T. O'Reilly, Carn.

777 A very large number of things are considered lucky or the reverse. It is unlucky to dig a grave on a Monday, on which day also no change of residence should be made, a Friday should rather be chosen, as that is the lucky day for moving. To meet a red-haired woman on starting out in the morning, to mention a priest while fishing, to take fish out of a house without sprinkling some salt on it, to sell milk without putting in a pinch of salt, to give fire out of the house on May-day, or to anyone in whose dwelling a sick person may be, all these are unlucky. People "born with teeth" [845] are unlucky also; but to be "born with a caul" is a sign of great good fortune, though should the original owner ever see it his luck will depart; the possession of a caul is believed to protect against death by drowning. A mole on the face, if "above the breath," is considered to have the same protective influence.

● 787 Death within the year is believed to be the fate of the man who has the temerity to make an addition to the western side of his house, or to build out at the back; several instances of men who died within a short time after thus offending are sure to be told to the incredulous.

The banshee, the death-watch, the creaking of furniture, and the howling of a dog at night are all looked upon as death-warnings. Several persons were met with who asserted that they had heard the banshee before the death of relatives.

585 At weddings the bride and bridegroom must step over the threshold of the chapel door together, as whichever goes out first will be the first to die.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
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the fairies. A few years ago the cattle on this farm became ill, and one after another died; the people of the house consulted a "fairy woman," who told them that the cause of the disease was the defiling of the fairies play-ground, by allowing a manure heap on the south side of the house, but that if this were removed that all would be well. Her advice was taken, and from that day forth the illness ceased. Dirty water should not be thrown out at night for fear of offending the fairies. 776

Many of the old customs mentioned by writers of the earlier part of the century have become extinct. People from the mainland no longer bury their dead on Inishglora, and some other customs connected with this island have died out since it became uninhabited; the first that two people could not go together into one of the ruined cells or cloghans without breaking bread between them, neglect of which would cause one of the two to die within the year; the other that every visitor should kiss the wooden statute of St Brendan.[1] Though these customs have gone, many still continue to exist—wakes, funeral customs, and straw-boys at weddings have been already mentioned; wren hunting is practised, and the "wran-bush" carried round on St. Stephen's Day, as in most other parts of Ireland. On St. John's Eve bon-fires, or Beltain fires, are lighted, and people used to jump through the smoke over them when they got low; many still endeavour on these occasions to take home a live coal to kindle their own fires with. 178 789

The sign of the cross is made over the mouth when yawning to avert evil. Hair-cuttings are carefully put away in a hole in the wall in order that strength may be preserved. 788

The sale of cattle is completed by dipping a stick in dirt, and marking the beasts therewith. 231 432

Girls sometimes try means of discovering what their future husband will be like. The following is a specimen:—On the first sight of the first new moon of the New Year, the girl kneels down and says seven "Our Fathers" and seven "Hail Marys"; then she takes some of the clay from under her left knee and puts it into a left stocking, which she then buries until retiring at night, when she takes it up and sleeps on it to dream of her future husband. 787●

There is a love charm of a rather gruesome character which is still 832

[1] It used to be the custom for all ships passing Inishglora to lower top sails in honour of St. Brendan; and it was believed that any man who thrice lifted the statue in his arms was rendered capable of helping women in difficult labours.—O'DONOVAN.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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342 to a round-ended house. But there are many missing links in the evolution of the Irish house, which archaeological excavation will hope to find some day. Interpretative studies of Dark-Age texts are also needed.[1]

342 524 787 Clues to old methods of house building may also be found in forms of construction used for outbuildings or in children's games. There is, for example, a Hallowe'en spell or divination game known as 'building the house' in which twelve couples of holly twigs are arranged in a circle, pushed into the ground and tied together at the apex. A live turf representing the fire is placed in the centre. The coupled twigs are named after the boys and girls present, and the pair which first catches fire indicates which boy and girl will first be coupled in marriage.[2] Compare with this a description of Irish houses in the early seventeenth century: 'the baser cottages are built of underwood, called wattles, and covered with thatch . . . of a round form and without chimneys, and in my imagination resemble so many hives of bees about a country farm.'[3]

342 Today nearly all Irish farm-houses are a simple rectangle in ground plan, anything from ten to twenty feet in width and of varying length according to the number of rooms they comprise, each room being the full width of the house. The normal developed house has three rooms, consisting of a central kitchen with a bedroom at the bottom end and another—the best room, called simply 'the room'—behind the chimney, which helps to warm it (Fig. 8). This, in the Gaeltacht, is the 'west room', reserved for family mementoes, for the old people and especially for the dead. Here the body is placed during wakes, and a wealth of superstition gathers around this room.[4] Arensberg may have been mistaken in translating the Gaelic *iarthar* as 'west', for the word also means 'back', but there are old beliefs about the orientation of the dwelling house, and it is possible that there was an association between death and the direction of the setting sun. The confusion between 'west' and 'back' is amusingly illustrated in the story of the Irish boy who,

[1]Angus Graham, 'Archaeological Gleanings from Dark Age Records', *P.S.A. Scot.* (1950–51), 64–91.

[2]Lady Wilde, *Ancient Legends of Ireland* (1888), 111.

[3]Luke Gernon, *A Discourse of Ireland, Anno 1620.*

[4]C. M. Arensberg, *The Irish Countryman* (1937), Ch. 1.

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quartzites. The bed-wing gives a narrow room additional width where it is most needed, near the fire. It may be that sufficiently long timbers for sizeable rafters were not easily procured in these mountain regions of poor soil. We may be dealing, however, with a feature which has died out in other regions and which has lived on in difficult country. The built-in wall-bed—the half-neuk—is known in the Orkneys, the Faroes and in the Hebridean black-houses and is characteristic of humble societies in other parts of the world. It is possible that in Ireland the wall-bed attests contacts with western Scotland which have repeatedly influenced that part of the country running south-westwards from Co. Antrim following the 'Caledonian grain' to Connacht. In any case the wall-bed appears to be restricted to the extreme north-western fringes of Europe.

The open hearth with all its associations is truly the heart and centre of house and home. The fire is, with her children, the 'care' of the woman of the house. 'A woman can never go to the fire', runs an Irish saying, 'without tampering with it.' The manifold duties of the housewife keep her moving about the hearth, tethered to it for most of the day. Her last duty at night is to 'smoor' it, burying a live turf in the ashes to retain a spark which can be fanned into a blaze next morning. This custom was fortified by the belief that the good folk, the fairies, would be displeased if there were no fire for them through the night. I have sat at fires which, it was claimed, had not been allowed to go out for over a century, or for as far back as family memory could go. It is to the fireside seat that the visitor is invited, for this is the place of honour, and it is around the fire that tales of old time are told. The magic of the open fire, playing upon the fancies of generations who have gathered round it, has engendered a host of beliefs and portents. The fire can give warning of wind and weather, of lucky and unlucky visitors, of marriage and death. Above all, it is a shrine to which ancestral spirits return, a link with the living past.[1]

[1]Since this chapter was written A. T. Lucas has published (in *Arctica*, 11, 16–35) an account of Wattle and Straw Mat Doors in Ireland. See page 65.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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an English introduction since 'sowing baskets' are listed in the medieval pipe-rolls of the Pale. In parts of the west, for example Mayo, a skin tray was used for sowing. But the usual Irish method is to sow from a linen sheet, kept specially for the purpose, which is tied round the sower. The seed is thrown with a one-handed cast, and it is not everyone's privilege to be allowed to undertake this important task. It calls for skill and concentrated care, for 'a missed bit' is a bad omen, foretelling death. The seed should all be safely 'buried' by the beginning of May, and in Co. Armagh the first cuckoo's call was taken as a sign. To be found sowing corn after this was a mark of deep disgrace: the laggard was labelled 'a cuckoo farmer'.

With modern ploughs and improved drainage it is not often, save in the tiny fields of the west, that one comes across cereal crops sown in ridges, but the lazy-bed method is very generally employed for potatoes and other crops where the spade is used, though the great bulk of the potato crop is sown in drills. The potato ridge presumably derives its name, lazy-bed, from the fact that the sod under the ridge is not dug: the bed is built up on top of the grass with sods and soil dug from the trenches between the ridges. Not only does this method make full use of the humus and decaying grass but it prevents the sets from becoming waterlogged and rotting, for the whole bed is raised above the water-table. And the unbroken sod checks the downwash of plant nutrients. The trenches or furrows between the ridges provide open drains, and the lazy-beds are always carefully aligned with the slope of the land. Moreover, when the trenches are dug a second time for earthing the potatoes, they often go deep enough to penetrate the hard layer of iron pan which tends to form under heavily leached soils by the washing down of iron salts. This the old-fashioned plough could not do. Breaking the impermeable pan not only improves the drainage but provides minerals which are returned to the topsoil when the potatoes are earthed. The ridges in which potatoes are grown in their Andean homeland appear to be similar to the Irish lazy-beds, and tuber crops throughout the tropics are planted in ridges or mounds, but the ridge-technique is certainly older than the potato in Ireland. Clearly an efficient shovel is a requirement in the construction of ridges of any

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[412]

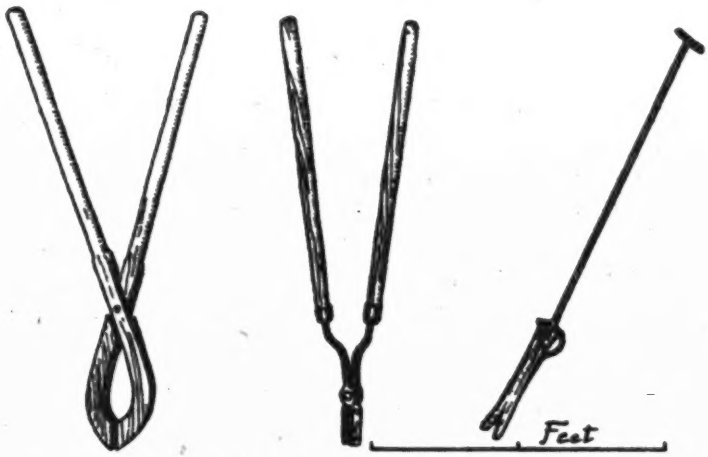

FIG. 50. Weeding 'clips', Antrim and Armagh, and iron dock-lifter, Antrim.

Midsummer festival was an easy way of showing the spirits of the corn what was expected of them. You might also hope to transfer ill-luck to someone else's crop by burying a dead animal, [787] a piece of meat, or even an egg on his land. It would be worth while listening for the call of the cuckoo on the first day of July, for to hear it was a sign of a good harvest. Prognostications were so many and so easily procured that they apparently provided a fatalistic society with a ready means of avoiding steady work. In some parts of the country, docks, thistles and [824] couch grass were apparently regarded as a good sign, because they kept the crop warm.[1]

[1] W. Bence Jones, *A Life's Work in Ireland*, 87.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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243 heads of corn at the wrong end, or they would be missed in thrashing with the flail, and for the same reason the ears of the straw band-knot should lie towards the top of the sheaf. The sheaves should be laid with their butts to the wind, for these need most drying. The bands should be tied with nice judgement, tight but not over-tight: one should not be able to put the toe of one's boot under the band when one stands on the butt of the sheaf.

[468] As in all farming operations conducted in traditional ways, music and magic to ease the labour were part of the scene. There were shearing songs to match the rhythm of the sickle, [825] and its efficiency was improved by keeping a fly or other insect imprisoned in the handle; perhaps its incessant activity was meant to speed up the work. Another strange belief was that [777] luck followed the reaper who carried a child on his back. The world of magic and fairy was close by at harvest time: it was believed that the top grain (pickle) of every stalk of corn was empty because it had been taken by the fairies and was their due. The sheaf had its share of lore, too, related possibly to its [954] semblance of human shape. A curse could be worked by sticking pins into the joints of the straw, and the sheaf might be properly waked and buried so that as it withered the object of the curse would decline. Stooks with their 'hudders' (Fig. 51) (hooding sheaves) also take on human forms, and I have known various terms for these large stooks applied as nicknames to broad-based country women. 'The last sheaf' also is known as the cailleach or hag.

Beliefs and customs connected with the last sheaf are legion and find their counterparts in many parts of the world. 'Winning the churn' was an incentive to the reaper, for good luck attended those who had their rigs sheared quickly if only because they avoided the ill-luck of being last. Stories are told of rigs being left unclaimed and uncut because their owners feared to incur 'the famine of the farm', of having the hag to feed until next harvest. The basis of this belief was that the last sheaf was sometimes hidden overnight in the corn of lazy farmers, who would watch at nights and reap by moonlight to avoid what was an omen of misfortune or death.

● [787] The last handful of standing corn, selected for the purpose,

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was twisted into a three-stranded plait. Standing back at a mark, the reapers threw their spinning hooks at it in turn until it was severed and 'stretched'. At this a triumphant shout was raised. The cailleach was sometimes 'waked' before it was lifted: the 'corpse' was hung round the neck of the triumphant slayer, who was guest at the subsequent 'churn' (the harvest feast and dance) and who was fated to be the reaper who would be first married. It was, perhaps, more usual for the cailleach to be put around the neck of the master or mistress of the house. From the threat of being hanged by it they would purchase their freedom by providing the churn supper, for which special food was prepared. There are many variant practices but it is clear that they all turn on the same themes, the spirit of the corn and the luck of a speedy harvest. In some districts the cailleach was known as the hare, and the cry which kept the toiling shearers to their task was; 'We'll put the hare out of it today!'

It was customary to hang the churn in the kitchen, either over the door, on the dresser, or about the chimney hearth, and to keep it until the following harvest, when it was given to the cows. Or it might be fed to the horses on the first day of ploughing. In some houses the last sheaf was preserved year after year, and I have seen specimens half a century old. One of these was dressed with coloured papers, hinting that there was formerly more ceremony connected with the last sheaf than has survived. These dressed cailleachs figure in the harvest festival decoration in some churches in Co. Armagh, where also miniature corn ricks surmounted by a harvest knot are displayed, the Church thus having won over and preserved the pagan symbols of harvest (See Tailpiece).

Harvest knots or bows are decorative twists of straw which were worn by the harvesters, and are still quite commonly carried by young men at harvest time in some districts (Plate 13, 1). Girls would wear them in their hair, boys in their coats, and in former times they were exchanged by the sexes as a sign of mutual attachment. They are made in a fine plait of two straws tied into loops or interlaced, those worn by the girls having the ears of the corn left on. The best examples are made from wheat, and some exceptionally fine specimens are made from

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527 It was popularly believed that the saint wandered through
776 the countryside on the eve of her feast day. Bread was left on the doorstep, and in some districts it was the custom to prepare a small bed of rushes or birch twigs and place it by the fire so that Bridie might come in and rest. Sometimes the last sheaf of harvest was used for the purpose. In south-western Ireland a
[532] doll made of straw—or decorated churn-staff—was carried
[292] from house to house by 'Biddy Boys', wearing straw masks such as are used by mummers and by strawboys at weddings, and singing songs in honour of the saint. They would solicit
[864] gifts and end the day in jollification. The evening was celebrated by a supper of pancakes taken from a plate laid on a rush cross,
[787] and as on the other quarter-days prognostications were made. A ribbon or piece of cloth exposed on St. Briget's Eve became
[789] endowed with curative powers. It was believed that no work which involved the turning of a wheel should take place on the saint's day. The placing of a periwinkle in each corner of the kitchen likewise hints at a remote pre-agricultural origin for the festival, but it came to be associated with the pastoral promise of spring, of warmth, new grass, lambs and milk. It is said that the saint placed her foot in water on her feast day so that on that day it begins to warm up each year.

St. Patrick is credited with carrying the process a stage further by putting a stone in the water, or alternatively 'turning
[805] up the warm side of the stone'. 17th March marks the end of
[221] winter and the starting-point of work in the fields. The countryman likes to have his first ridge of potatoes planted on that day, and he is not greatly moved by the patriotic celebrations which are anyhow more in evidence in New York and Boston than in Ireland. Traditionally the cult of St. Patrick is strongest in Ulster, where hundreds of churches and holy wells are named in his honour, and according to legend he was reluctantly accepted as patron saint in some of the other Irish regions. They say in
[191] Ulster that Connachtmen speak with husky accents because their forebears stole and ate St. Patrick's goat. Like Columbkille,
[824] Patrick is remembered for his curses as well as his prophecies, for instance he cursed the rushes that pricked him when he rested, so that every green rush has a brown tip.

527 To refer to all the associations of the movable feasts of

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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FIXED FESTIVALS

Easter would take us away from our present subject but mention must be made of some of the folk practices connected with Shrove Tuesday, Ash Wednesday, Easter and Whitsuntide. Shrove Tuesday (Shraft) was a time for hunting the hare, and for feasting in preparation for Lent. A portion of the meat was not eaten but hung in the rafters. It was the great day of the year for marriages, and on that night tricks of many kinds were played on unmarried adults and on courting couples who had not fulfilled their promise. They were serenaded with horn-blowing; animals were tied to the doors of their houses, and cart wheels were rolled down hill. At Ardmore in Co. Waterford a piece of symbolic horseplay was performed by the young men on Ash Wednesday. A hollowed stone with a hole in the centre was the scene of the play. In the hole was stuck a wattle with a handful of tow tied to its top, and unmarried women were made to dance around the stone, holding the tow and spinning while they danced. 'The youths then terminated their amusements by dragging them through the village seated on old logs of wood.'[1]

Good Friday was an important day in the farmer's year, the luckiest day on which to begin the sowing of corn. There was an aversion to the use of iron and to the shedding of blood on Good Friday, which was a favourite day for visiting holy wells and the graves of the dead. Shell-fish were eaten, and visits to the shore were enlivened with games and horse-racing. On Easter Day the young folk would be up early in the morning to see the sun dance, and during the day vast quantities of eggs were consumed. The colouring and rolling of eggs are customs kept up by children in many districts. A special Easter Day dance, for which the prize was a large cake exhibited on a garlanded churn-staff, is popularly supposed to have given rise to the expression 'taking the cake', in the sense of beating all comers. If Easter was a lucky time, ominous superstitions attached to Whitsuntide, for example persons born at that time were supposed to have the evil eye, to be fated to die a violent death, or to take a life. A chicken would sometimes be killed in the hands of a Whitsun child to serve as a substitute slaughter. To cross water or go to sea at Whitsun was to invite death by drowning.

[1]E. Fitzgerald, *J.R.S.A.I.* (1856), 48.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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ences affecting human beings and the animals and crops were usually potent. It is remembered that 'the oldest woman in the town' would go round the fire three times on her knees, reciting prayers. To walk three times sunwise round the fire was to ensure a year without sickness, and as the flames died down the cattle were driven through the embers and their backs were singed with a lighted hazel wand: the sticks were preserved and utilized for driving the cows. By tradition everyone carried home a burning stick from the fire, and whoever was first to take it into the house brought the good luck of the year with him. A glowing turf from the fire was carried three times sunwise round the dwelling house, and others were thrown into the growing crops. Yarrow was hung in the house to ward off illness. Fernseed was gathered for its magic powers and divinations made from the roots of bracken and lilies. We have already noticed the custom of retaining some of the ashes from the Midsummer fires to mix with the following season's seed corn.

The third fire-festival of the year is associated with St. Peter's Eve on 28th June, but I have not come across many traditions of St. Peter's bonfires except in Armagh and Wexford: it may thus be mainly restricted to areas where English influence was strong. More widespread and better known, because they have been caught up in many patterns and in such popular pilgrimages as that to Croagh Patrick, are the celebrations of Lammas, originally 1st August, now held on Lammas Sunday, the last in July, which is also known as Garland, Bilberry or Height Sunday. This marked the end of summer and the beginning of harvest: it was a first-fruits festival into which the alien potato has been fitted, and no potatoes were dug before this time. Offerings of flowers and fruits were made at holy wells, and in some places cattle were made to swim through streams and loughs into which lumps of fresh butter had been cast:[1] 'They think no beast will live the whole year through unless they be thus drenched'.[2] In hilly districts Height Sunday is observed by climbing to a recognized picnic place where bilberries are gathered and games and dancing were formerly enjoyed. In Co. Down a large prehistoric

[1]Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths*, 1, 282.
[2]Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 121.

13:Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1957
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at that time and that the ceremony presumably took place in the priest's house.)

'Whichever of the new married couple first rises after the nuptial benediction, will, it is considered, live longest . . .; after this scene is over they again adjourn to the public house . . ., after which the company again mount their horses, the bride being then changed behind the bridegroom's man, and scamper away towards the bride's house, whilst numbers of people are collected on the hills and eminences to behold the race for the bottle. The winning of the bottle is frequently contended for between the bridegroom's and the bride's parties; the first person that arrives at the bride's house is victorious. The victor then receives the bottle and again returns to the main body of the wedding, where he hands it to the bridegroom, who first drinks of it and hands it to his bride, who also partakes, it then goes the round until nearly finished, when . . . the bridegroom flings it with the remaining contents away. On their arrival at the bride's house a cake of oatmeal or flour, which is called the bride's cake is broken over the bride's head, and is greedily seized upon by young people of both sexes for the purpose of placing a portion of it under their pillow, in order that they may dream of their future partners in life. Another scene of noisy festivity and drunkenness then commences, which often terminates in riot and bloodshed between the different parties; there being frequently a kind of rivalry between them in supporting the dignity of the bridegroom and bride, particularly if they do not happen to be of one line of ancestors.'[1]

No doubt where land and livestock were involved such marriages were not so uninhibited as it might appear. Physical attraction was not a prime consideration. The normal course was for a peasant to marry a girl whose capabilities were known or could be fairly judged, preferably 'a far-out friend', who lived close enough for family visits and exchanges of labour to be made. We know from other accounts of marriage customs in the early nineteenth century that the order of events as described above was sometimes reversed: 'The marriage is agreed upon by bargain, and the theft or abduction follows as a concerted

[1] J. Donaldson, *Upper Fews*, 64–66.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
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County Clare

COLLECTANEA.

A Folklore Survey of County Clare.

(With Plate XI.[1]).

131 631 County Clare from the fourth century of our era was united politically with North Munster, Tuath Mumhain, or Thomond, though separated from it by the broad waters of the Shannon. Standing thus by itself, "isolated by the Sea, the River, and the enmity of Connaught," it might be expected that it would preserve until modern times an unbroken tradition from the prehistoric past, and that a survey of its folklore would show many traces of ancient beliefs still surviving. The battle goddess *Catabodva*, 776 worshipped in antique Gaul, appears as the *Bodbh* of battle (*cath*) in the wars fought by the Princes of Clare in 1014 and 1317, 787 and the spirit that washed the bloodstained clothes and limbs of the then living combatants still, I was told three years ago, foretells calamity by washing clothes in the same waters.[2] *Ptists* or water snakes,—emblems, perhaps, of pagan islanders or devouring seas and lakes,—abound in the legends of a very early date, and are still reputed to seize the cattle, and even human 121 beings, drowned in the lakes of Clare. The place names considered below will show to what an extent our present nomen- 124 clature records the mythology and sagas of early days, and I propose in the remainder of this first paper to deal with the banshee, the death coach, and the fairies. The bulk of the traditions

[1] This plate of the Ancient Parishes of County Clare has been kindly lent by the Council of the Royal Irish Academy, and appears in their *Proceedings*, S. III., vol. iv.

[2] Cf. the *lavandières de nuit*, discussed by Sébillot, *Le Folk-lore de France*, Tome iii.

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as their war-goddess,[21] so, before the baptism of King Cairthinn, (first Christian Prince of his House, about A.D. 430), the ancestors of the Dalcassians may have worshipped Aibhinn on her holy hill, and her equally lovely sister Aine, crowned with meadowsweet, on the tamer mound of Knockaney. Whether, if so, they found her already enthroned at Craglea on their conquest of the district, or whether the conqueror Lugad consecrated the mountains to his patroness, it is now impossible to guess. Aibhill, as banshee, held her own. We find her even usurping the place of the "Sybil" in a translation of the *Dies Iræ*,[22] in unwonted companionship with King David, and she was a commonplace of local threnodies during the eighteenth, and even the nineteenth, century. In the lake below Rathblamaic in Inchiquin she has down to recent years been seen, with the twenty-five other banshees of Clare that call her their queen, washing clothes before any impending disaster.[1]

The next appearance of a banshee in local history is of a very different spirit three centuries later. The *Cathreim Thoirdhealbhaigh* ("Triumphs of Torlough") was written probably about A.D. 1350 by Seean mac Craith, the hereditary historian.[20] It contains accounts of three spirit women,—one, the "Sovereignty of Erin," being of surpassing loveliness, and the two others, (if not the same,—"Dismal" and "Water Dismal"), of loathsome hideousness. The hags, however, probably survive, while the "Sovereignty" has perished. Bronach ("the sorrowful or dismal one") of Ceann Boirne was known as the "Hag of Black Head" from the modern name of the older Ceann (or Rinn) of Burren. She was in full repute in 1839, and I have heard of her vaguely about 1885 or 1887. In August, 1317, she

[21] Cf. *Revue Archéologique*, N.S., vol. xviii. (1868), p. 1; Sir Samuel Ferguson's paper, from the Irish point of view, in *Dublin University Magazine*, Oct. 1834, p. 463; W. M. Hennessy, "The War Goddess of the Ancient Irish," *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. x., p. 425.

[22] Mss., Royal Irish Academy, 23.M.47.

[1] As yet only in manuscript,—one copy of A.D. 1509, and another probably from one of 1449. For its age see *Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. xxiii., p. 139.

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III. *The Death Coach.*[31]

1763 The "headless Coach" or "coach a bower" seems of far later date than the banshee. Ghostly chariots such as that of Cuchulain figure in very early tales, but neither their appearance nor their sound foretold death.[32] In Clare, at sight or sound of the coach, all gates should be thrown open, and then it will not stop at the house to call for a member of the family, but only foretell the death of some relative at a distance.[33]

1787

1763 I collected five stories, three of well-defined character, and give them in order of time as the dates can be fixed. The first appearance, on the night before June 18th, 1806, was related to my three informants[34] most solemnly by their fathers and uncles. Two told it in a general and confused way, but varied from the story of the third, which I give, only by omissions. Ralph Westropp, of Attyflin and Lismehane,—the latter place is in Clare, but I never could learn where he died,—lay sick unto death. His sons in the late dusk waited on the steps for the arrival of the doctor. Suddenly they saw and heard a large coach drive into the paved court before the house. One of them stepped down to open the door, but the dark object rumbled past and drove down the long, straight avenue, which was fenced on both sides. Two of the watchers ran after it, hearing it ahead of them. The noise stopped, and they expected to find the coach at the gate. They ran full tilt against the bars, the gate being closed and locked. They called up the lodgekeeper, and he was found to have been asleep with the keys still beside him. The sick man died the next morning.

Lismehane, under its later name of Maryfort, afterwards became the residence of the O'Callaghan family, its present occupants. On the night of April 29th, 1821, two servants,—one of whom was "Matty Halloran" who died not long ago at an advanced

[31] *Cf.* "Irish Folklore from Cavan, Meath, Kerry, and Limerick," vol. xix., pp. 320-1; vol. x., p. 119.

[32] Is not the death coach, and not the Hellequin, the "hell waine" of Reginald Scot's list of spirits in *The discoverie of witchcraft*, Bk. vii., cap. xv.?

[33] *Cf.* Herefordshire belief about corpse candles.

[34] The late Capt. Ralph Westropp of Coolreagh (in 1879), and the late Mrs. Wilme and Mrs. Pitcairn, whose fathers were present.

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Malbay. She was white-skinned and had well-shaped white hands. The party tried to make friends with her, giving her bread, which she ate. Then a Quilty fisherman got frightened, said she was "something bad," and threw a pebble at her, on which she plunged into the sea and disappeared. Soon afterwards King Edward died. An old man at Spanish Point said the last mermaid was seen the year of the Great Famine (1846), and that such an appearance foretells a public disaster.

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VIII. *Ghosts and Haunted Houses.*

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Here, "where'er we tread is haunted," and libellous, ground, so that in the majority of cases the names and definite addresses must be withheld, although in every case I am acquainted with them.

Taking first the ancient buildings, I am unable to state the nature of the haunter of Lisananima (ghost fort) in Kilcorney, or of the other places of like name, although, as regards the former, Dr. George MacNamara and I did our best, about 1897, to find out, for the ghost was said to have been seen recently; so also at Toberatasha (spectre well). At Lisfuadnaheirka, near Kilkee, we were told in 1896 of a "horned ghost," but "Fuadnaheirka" was a local "terror by night" who slew people, as Eugene O'Curry says his bare legs knew when, (as a boy in 1816), he lived close to Dunaheirka (or Liscroneen), a large fort, which was the chief seat of this being, and was evidently a place to be run past on dark winter evenings.[6] It is not wonderful that stories should be so vague. A form "that shape has none" terrifies some nervous or drunken person, who afterwards speaks often of the ghost, but can give no details. The subject is usually regarded too seriously for verbal embroidery.

A fisherman, being detained on Scattery Island by a storm early last century, and hence unable to attend mass at Kilrush, went up into the "cathedral"[7] to pray. After a time he looked up and saw a crowd of monks and laity with priests at the altar in

[6] *Ordnance Survey Letters*, (Co. Clare), vol I., pp. 370 *et seq.*

[7] This is the Church of St. Mary near the Round Tower.

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777 the hens from laying more; this is held at least near Tulla and Sixmilebridge, but seems dying out near the former place.

XIII. *Omens, Dreams, and Divination.*

●787 *Omens.*—It is an unlucky sign to meet "a stranger woman with red hair," or a hare, or a fox, when setting out in the morning. A poem by Andrew MacCurtin, as already noted,[4] condoles with Father MacDonnell, a Franciscan living in Corcomroe, for the loss of his horse, and suggests that the *garran* [562] fell a victim to the evil eye or to the look of a red-haired woman. A sign much feared in north-east Clare is the flying of a bat into one's face, which forebodes sickness. A robin, a stray cat, or [763] a cricket coming into a house is lucky, but some regard the last as a sign of death,—though this belief is rare and perhaps imported, for in Dublin "the ever-faithful cricket" is also a death omen. If the right ear tingles some one is praising you, and if the left someone is abusing you. If the right hand itches you will lose money, and if the left you will receive it, providing you rub or scratch it on wood. Any one of these omens from itching is good after sunset, and rubbing the right hand on wood saves the situation or the money in either case. To get dirt on [777] one is most lucky,—"the dirtier the better." To stumble upstairs, and to be looked at by a cat after it has washed its face, are signs of approaching marriage.

Dreams.—It is most unlucky to dream of church or clergy, and, above all, of the sacraments. To dream of a cat foretells an enemy; of a dog, a friend; of crows or filth, riches and plenty; of silver, disappointment; and of dirty or stormy water, trouble. Cheap dream books have corrupted local belief so much that it is now almost impossible to separate the older dream lore.

Divination.—I have not found many methods of foretelling the future, but the following were of such common knowledge that I need cite no single authorities. On All Hallows Eve, I remember, before 1870, a blindfolded person would touch one of several saucers in which were respectively earth, water, salt, a bean, etc., symbolising death, emigration, luck, marriage, etc., in

[4] Vol. xxi., p. 196.

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the ensuing year. In the same way a forecast was given by a ring, coin, bean, or red rag in the cake on the same day, and by a ring in the pancakes on Shrove Tuesday. On the former day also lead was melted and poured through a key handle into water for fortune-telling. The key of a bachelor's house or room and a piece of wedding-cake put under a girl's pillow produced a prophetic dream in which she might see her future husband or lover. A slug or snail put under a saucer on a slate or cabbage leaf, sprinkled with turf ashes or flour, traced the future lover's initials, as did a long apple or orange peel waved thrice round the head and then thrown down. "Cup-tossing" (*i.e.* cup-turning with tea leaves) was used, unsuccessfully, by a lady in 1879 to find out the future purchaser of her family's demesne. Wandering beggar-women used cup-tossing for the fortunes of both maids and mistresses, and some gained much repute. One of these crones showed a sister of mine a rearing horse in the tea leaves, and foretold that her client was about to have a very narrow escape from death on the hunting field that day, which came true. Biddy Erly, a famous white witch living between Bodyke and Feakle in the middle of last century, used to foretell the death or recovery of her patients by a shamrock leaf in some fluid in a bottle; if it rose they recovered, but if it sank they died, and her prophecies were received with such undoubting faith that it is likely that they worked sometimes their own fulfilments. I heard that by a Protestant servant a key was shut and tied up in a Bible, its wards on Ruth's reply when Naomi asked her to return from her, the book being then swung and the representative of Boaz surmised from the direction in which it pointed; but this may not have been true Clare folklore. Among the country folk crystal-gazing is unknown, and palmistry little, if at all, in use, but the more primitive methods have not been put down by increase of education, and the warning is still necessary of the quatrain cited in 1280, according to the *Cathreim Thoirdhealbaigh*, by King Torlough mór O'Brien, as he set out to fight in this county,—"Attempt ye not the prediction of the lips; neither in curved (new) moon nor in presage of soothsayer put your trust."

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enchanted human beings.[4] It gets more definite above Galway Bay, where the Kinealeys are of reputed seal descent. Some such belief may underlie the name Cumarra (or sea-hound) in the MacNamara family. I found more difficulty in getting fisher beliefs in recent years than in getting folklore from the country people. Much of what I heard in 1906 was probably of tourist origin, and, like the *merrow* at Killard,[5] not to be trusted as genuine belief.

Otter.—Beyond vague belief in an enormous "durracow"[6] (the king of the otters), which I heard of as a child on the Shannon Bank about some unnamed lake in east Clare, I am not aware of any folklore about this creature in the county. There was said to be a "remarkable" otter at Glenomera.

Cat.—The cat was much regarded by the early Irish, and holds honourable place in their ancient code of laws. It even appears in the illuminations of the *Book of Kells*. Numerous places in Clare bear its name, but local belief tends to consider the "cat" in these names as a weird monster. The "Cata" and "Faracat" of legend[7] were probably "dragons." The cat has supernatural knowledge. If a cat looks fixedly at a person without apparent reason it forebodes sickness or death, but if it does so to an unmarried person, after making its toilet, it foretells marriage.

[4] So in Aed Baclamp from the *Book of Lismore*, (*Silva Gadelica*, vol. ii., p. 72), St. Brendan changes 50 seals into horses, which carry into the sea their riders, who, on reaching it, are, like their steeds, changed into seals.

[5] Vol. xxi., p. 342. Mrs. Dorothea Townshend of Oxford calls my attention to the probability that this story was made up by Dr. Keightley (v. App. to his *Fairy Mythology*). In my original Ms. I expressed great doubt as to this story, having found no equivalent to it near Dunbeg or Kilkee, but this was unfortunately omitted in publication. The Miltown mermaid was probably one of the white seals occasionally seen on the coast.

[6] *I.e. Dobharchu*, water-hound. The Irish called the wolf *faol-chu* (wild hound) and *cu allaid*, and the marten *crann chu* (branch hound). The more common name for the wolf in Clare is *breagh*, as in Breaghva and Breffy, the name of several townlands. The other wolf name *Mac Tire* (son of the country), is attached to Knockaunvicteera hill near Lisdoonvarna (where it refers to the animal), and to Cahermactire, a fort near Inchiquin Hill; at the latter place it may refer to a person, as the name Mac Tire is found in various annals.

[7] Vol. xxi., pp. 477-9.

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son-in-law the King of Leinster. Others connected Killone with Clare Abbey, and Quin Abbey with St. Finghin's church at the other side of the "Rine."

XXI. *Miscellanea and Addenda.*

Treasure legends and hunting.—Many forts have been much defaced by persons seeking treasure, though treasure legends are few. Caherscrebeen, near Lemeneagh castle (the Caherscribnib of 1551),[14] is said to be the richest fort in Ireland, having three rooms full respectively "of gold, deer's tallow, and *beor lochlanagh*" or Dane's beer (made by a lost recipe from heather and "the finest of all drinks").[15] Treasure-hunting is, so far as I have learned, in nearly every case in consequence of a dream, especially of a dream repeated more than once. No particular ceremony seems to have been used. The dreamer went, usually by night and sometimes alone or sometimes with a few friends, to the spot indicated, and dug until tired and hope of success was lost. Most of the damage done to stone forts and castles results, in the former from rabbit hunters, and in the latter from people getting material for other buildings. Silver (money) is believed to be buried in the mound of Lismehane castle, and near the curiously scribed rock of Cloch-an-airgid (rock of the silver) near Bohneill castle. I have seen in the field within Dunlicka castle,[16] near Kilkee, the holes made by a seeker who was told to dig where he saw a rush growing. "The great Clare gold find" in 1845, near Moghane fort, enriched archaeology rather than folklore. But the finders in some cases believed it to be fairy gold, and the people of Newmarket-on-Fergus tell that those who got it, with one exception, did not profit by it; the one lucky exception did not find his prosperity permanent. The only interesting treasure tale I have found is that of the townland of Skaghvickencrow (MacEnchroe's hawthorn), told by Dr. G. U.

[14] In the will of the last recognised King of Thomond, Murrogh, Earl of Thomond.

[15] *The Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, vol. xxvi., p. 368.

[16] See also vol. xxi., p. 344.

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Leochain, who was slain in 1024. The King of Cashel (over-king, therefore, of North Munster) was forbidden to pass a night at Latteragh in northern Tipperary at the beginning of harvest; to encamp for nine consecutive nights at the river Suir; to hold a border meeting at Gowran; and to listen to the groans of women (in a raid) in southern Tipperary. The King of Connacht was not to go in a speckled cloak,—the prose adds "on a piebald horse,"—to the heath of Luchaid in Clare. On the other hand, the ruler of Cashel brought good luck by plundering cattle in Connacht while the cuckoo sings; burning north Leinster; passing over Sliabh Cua,—"on a Tuesday," says the prose,—to pacify south Munster; crossing Magh Ailbhe with a light grey host; and resting six weeks (of Lent) every year at Cashel. It was most unlucky for him to wait for a feast at Killarney Lake for a full week from a Monday. At the present day some families still have their own tabus, lucky and lucky deeds and days, dreams, and omens, which sometimes even run counter to beliefs generally received,—*e.g.* that the Friday falling on the thirteenth of any month, or to dream of a wild cat or other wild animal, is lucky.

Witch hare.[35]—Anthony Bruodin (*Bruodinus* or *Prodinus*), a Franciscan of Quin Abbey, tells in *Corolla Oecodemicæ Minoritica* (Prague, 1664, p. 73) how his uncle (*patruus*), Florence of Moynaeo (Moynoe on Lough Derg) went out at the dawn of the first of May with his eldest son Bonaventura, (who died in Spain in 1643), and with their hounds to hunt hares. At last the servants saw one sucking a cow. The hounds chased it, biting it as it escaped, into a cottage, where an old woman was found torn behind.

Glasgeivnagh cow.[36]—Vague legends are told of her living at Treanahow, Shallee, and Ballygannon.

Ghosts or fairy men.—Mary (Mescal) Doyle, of Newmarket-on-Fergus, tells how she saw two ghostly men in black walking on a road near that village.

Stolen bride.—A legend of a stolen bride at Querin on the Shannon is told in Lady Wilde's *Ancient Legends etc. of Ireland* (1887), vol. i., p. 49.

[35] Addendum to vol. xxii. p. 449.
[36] Addendum to p. 89 *supra*.

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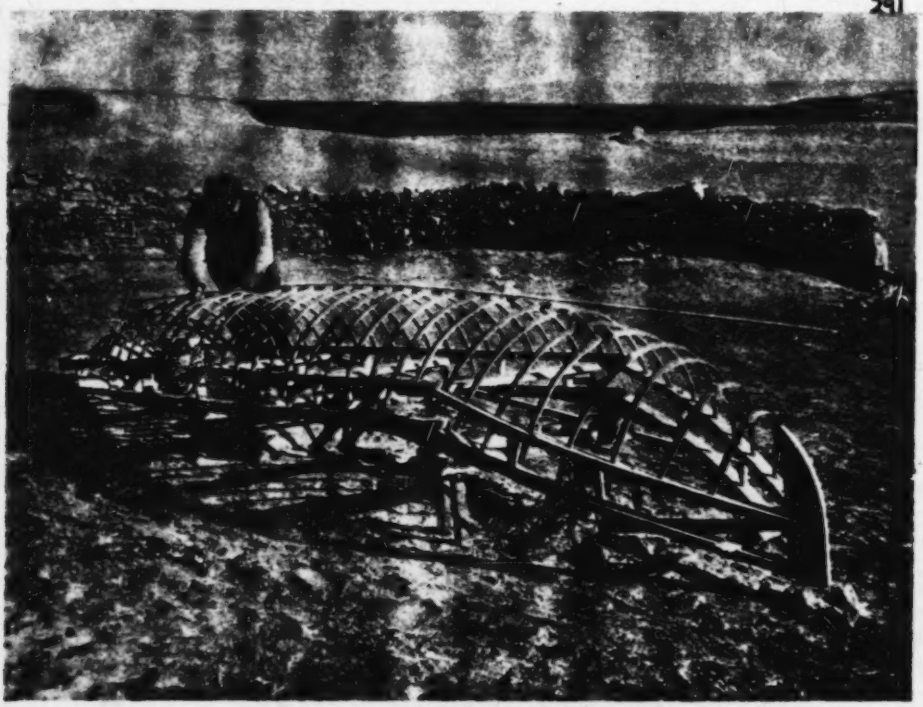

Figure 10. Assembling lathes in the construction of a canoe

folk of neighboring islands as well as mainland seamen for many miles around. A *curach* takes a week of steady work to construct, and the builder is paid 6 pounds for his labor and a shopkeeper 12 pounds for the materials.

The cursate blesses a newly manufactured canoe, and a small bottle of holy water is kept in its bow to afford the crew magical protection. Some fishermen seek further spiritual assistance by tipping their caps and making the sign of the cross with salt water before shoving off, especially if they are about to encounter hazardous weather conditions or are to make a long voyage. One of the many omens known to the folk is a "prayer to guide you safely," passed down from the time of St. Patrick, it is claimed, which is uttered by fishermen ready to put out to sea; if two mistakes are made in its recitation, danger is in the offing and the trip is postponed or cancelled. Another sign of impending peril which will cause postponement of a fishing trip is for one of the crew to meet a red-haired woman on the trail as he walks to the strand to embark.

The knit sweater, called a "ganzie," is not a traditional item of wear, as is

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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to put their property in a state of good repair, which, in retrospect, is regarded as a benefit, however much they might have complained of the labor involved during the previous weeks.

The sacred well, probably appropriated from the Druids 13 centuries ago, still attracts the folk and occasionally pilgrims from Inis Thiar and other islands. On the mainland, patterns often were associated with holy wells named after saints, but this does not seem to have been the case in Inis Beag. It was customary until about ten years ago for those who came to pray here to attach bits of cloth, rosaries, or sacred objects obtained from holy places of pilgrimage on the mainland and abroad, but this practice was halted by the clergy as smacking of paganism. Now it is visited for religious purposes mostly by small groups on Sunday afternoon, and by persons about to emigrate and their families who come to pray for the good fortune of the soon departed. The water in the spring is not considered holy, but capable of "bringing the grace of God and the saint," and if it is drunk during prayer, it is believed to be especially efficacious for curing sterility, among other afflictions. In this century, a partially blind islander is believed to have regained his sight after paying nine visits to the well on successive Sundays, and other miraculous cures from earlier times are reported. Those who come to the spring always seek a tiny fish or eel in the water, which, if observed, is merely a good omen to some but an assurance of reaching Heaven to others. Attaching rags to the well and seeking cures and omens there are all examples of reinterpretation. The spring also is used as a source of water by farmers who pasture stock in nearby fields and by thirsting passersby.

Pagan Supernaturalism

Pagan supernaturalism is disavowed by the folk, and it is difficult to know how widely held are beliefs in this sphere. That they are held is indisputable, as attested by the active efforts of curates up to this day to eradicate them. Youth of the island overtly deny the existence of other than church approved spiritual entities, although the most outspoken disclaimer of paganism among them is visited occasionally by the ghost of his father, who urges the continuation of a family feud. But elders cling tenaciously to indigenous beliefs and practices, about which they are extremely secretive for fear of being ridiculed by outsiders and their more skeptical fellows. Defensive about being labeled backward, the islanders feel that the "superstitions" they are said to hold most contribute to this impression. When the folk talk of pagan retentions and reinterpretations, they ascribe them to those who lived at the time that their parents or grandparents did, or to certain of their superstitious contemporaries. A notorious dissenter, who sometimes has occasion to patrol the shores of Inis Beag before dawn, antagonizes his neighbors by deriding them for their fear of venturing after dark to the back of the island, where fairies and ghosts hold sway. On telling him of my intention to spend a night resting atop a *clochán* near the Atlantic coast, he said, "The only thing that will happen is you'll hear the cocks crow in the morning." He is the only person who admitted to me that he disbelieves the teachings of the church concerning the soul

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and its fate. In further mocking his fellows for their apprehensions about death and its aftermath, he proclaimed that the soul, "if there is such a thing, goes nowhere after the heart stops beating."

Celtic deities no longer are a part of the belief system of the islanders, but the culture heroes of the Iron Age—such as Cuchulainn, Finn, and Oisin—still are extolled in legends, and the promontory fort and other ancient monuments and some of the geographical features (for instance, glacial boulders) in Inis Beag and nearby islands are explained by the actions of Celtic heroes. Spirits, demons, and witches of many sorts are the supernatural beings from the Celtic, and possibly pre-Celtic, era which figure most importantly in the pagan segment of the folk religion. They have become incorporated into orthodox Catholicism by being declared "works of the Devil" by those who admit to their existence (It is said that two priests of peasant background have admitted to this belief publicly in Inis Beag.)—a reinterpretation resorted to by many primitive and folk peoples under the duress of acculturation with dominance. The spiritual entities most linked with the Irish, both in writings and in popular imagination, are the trooping and solitary fairies, known to the islanders as the "little people," "good people," or "gentry." In Inis Beag, only the leprechaun and "red man" among the numerous solitary fairies are known. William Butler Yeats numbers the banshee, mermaid, pookah, and water horse among the solitary fairies (Yeats ND :76–77), but these are not regarded as such by the folk (The latter two are animal spirits, or demons, rather than human spirits.); also found in Inis Beag are the sea spirit, or "headless body," and other minor spirits and demons.

Fairies seldom permit themselves to be seen, but most of the islanders have experienced their presence, if only through having objects mysteriously misplaced by them or hearing them sing and cobble. These beings differ considerably in appearance—according to type, sex, and age—but most of them are knee-high and wear green jackets, flat red caps, and buckled shoes. The trooping fairies live in *clochán* and thorn bushes and spend most of their time feasting, singing, dancing, fighting, playing games, and making love. A spirited hurling match played by fairies on the strand was described to me by an observer who had witnessed it from a canoe approaching the island; he and his mates rowed close enough to overhear the creatures call out to each other by name. Small whirlwinds are a sign of their passing, and a farmer who was haying and failed to say the proper "God bless them.", as such a wind stirred his field, was punished by having all of the cocks that he had accumulated blown away. One verse of my ballad, poorly received by most islanders, tells of men who were afraid to board the freighter for several nights after trooping fairies had been seen dining in the mess and a ghost pacing the deck. Fairies disregard human beings most of the time, but they can harm those who disregard or speak ill of them, as well as play "fairy pranks" out of sheer capriciousness. One of their favorite modes of attack is to cast "fairy darts" at their victims; on the mainland, these are prehistoric flint artifacts, but in Inis Beag they are any small pebbles supposedly thrown from the sky to cause bodily harm. An Inis Thiar man collected a number of darts allegedly cast at him by irate gentry, only to have the collection confiscated by the curate in whom he indiscreetly confided. The most feared practice of trooping fairies is that of steal-

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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ing souls of children and leaving in their place changelings, who gradually sicken and die. Since boys are favored over girls, Irish peasants of the region until recently dressed their male offspring in petticoats, sometimes up to the age of 18 years, to deceive the little people. Even now parents are loath to praise the health or beauty of their children for fear that the gentry will overhear and be prompted to victimize their souls.

Solitary fairies are described by Yeats as "withered, old, and solitary, in every way unlike the sociable [trooping fairies]. . . . They dress with all unfairy homeliness, and are, indeed, most sluttish, slouching, peering, mischievous phantoms" (Yeats ND :76). The long occupation of Inis Beag by leprechauns is evidenced by the Garden of the Cobbler and a spring at the back of the island, shaped like the sole of a shoe, which is known as Well of the Boot. Occasionally a leprechaun has been seen in the former location, but only the sound of a tapping hammer has been heard in the latter. Instead of guarding a buried pot of gold at the foot of a rainbow, as popularly conceived, the leprechaun of Inis Beag possesses a small purse in which he keeps but a single coin. Children sometimes are urged to hunt for the hidden purse, as a distraction by harassed parents. The rift valley between Castle and High Villages is thought to be the home of at least one "red man." He wears a pointed cap to denote cleverness and has a laugh, as distinctive as the hammering of the leprechaun, by which his presence is known. A practical joker with poltergeist qualities, the red man prefers to frequent houses, where his mischief is countered with bottles of holy water. From November of 1959 until June of 1963, my wife and I experienced, first in Inis Beag and then in our home in the United States, the antics of an unseen being who opened doors and windows, turned on lights and water faucets, and imbibed our Irish whiskey. Tongue-in-cheek, we placed the blame for these uncanny occurrences on an amiable solitary fairy who had attached himself to us, but eventually I felt compelled to report our unique contact with the Celtic supernatural to the anthropological community—a gesture regarded as "poison oak in the scientific groves of academe" (Messenger 1962:367–373).

The spiritual omens of death are three in Inis Beag: the sound of trooping fairies building a coffin for the victim, soft tapping on the window pane of his bedroom, and the wailing of the banshee during the night before his demise. No one has ever viewed the banshee, but many have heard her cry out in the night, and the keen of Celtic derivation is said to be an imitation of her funeral call. She attaches herself only to certain families which inherit her patrilineally. An aged Inis Beag man was seriously ill with influenza on the night that my wife and I sponsored a dancing party, and a young man departing from it three hours after midnight played his accordion as he walked to his home located near that of the sick person. On learning of this event, the nurse shortly after dawn hurried to her patient to assure him that the wails he might have heard came from the instrument of the inexpert youth and not from the family banshee; at this news, thanatomania was prevented and the man lived another three weeks, when the banshee at last cried and was heard by those at his deathbed. Opinion is divided as to whether it is the fairies or the banshee who announce death by window tapping, but as a practical joke islanders long ago used to tap on the bedroom windows of those persons considered overly superstitious.

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misfortune to those whom he compliments. The extent of his power is measured by how soon after the compliment his victim suffers, and how serious is the calamity. Most feared of recent witches is a man who as a youth caused a newly arrived curate on his first walk of the island to fall and break his leg; within seconds after the boy praised the vigorous stride of the priest, "the poor creature disappeared behind a fence, feet over head." The folk seldom compliment one another, and when they do they append "God bless you." to the statement as a precautionary incantation. Persons with the evil eye neglect to do this, it is said. I often have wondered—when in a mood to credit the existence of fairies which turn on water faucets in the dead of night—if a series of misfortunes which befell me during 1960 and 1961 was somehow linked to one of these persons wishing me a good year, without uttering "God bless you.", as my wife and I put off the strand in a canoe at the end of our research. The same incantation is voiced by those in the vicinity of one who sneezes—in this case to prevent his soul from being captured by the fairies. It is tempting to attribute the unwillingness of Irish peasants generally to pay compliments to the age-old but now forgotten dread of being accused of the evil eye and of inviting fairies and hag witches to substitute changelings for human children.

Priests of the church at least a century ago rid Inis Beag of most religious practitioners of pagan disposition, but there is evidence that before their acculturative influence was felt diviners and workers of good and evil magic practiced techniques which had their roots in the Iron Age. Divining now is restricted mostly to the seeking of omens by everyone, and the astrological and tea leaf reading skills of several persons who do not charge for their services. The principal workers of magic in the past were herbalists, animal doctors, and bone setters; an animal doctor in Inis Beag and a bone setter in a nearby island still ply their inherited specialties for pay, but both men claim that they are practical folk physicians and do not command pagan or Christian spiritual powers. Just as the islanders share a common body of omens which are used to avoid the misfortunes and compound the benefits in store for them, they also share a common knowledge of folk medicines, which some believe to be more efficacious than the medicines provided by doctor and nurse. Indigenous medicines once were prescribed by workers of magic, misnamed "herb witches"—old women who gathered plants at dawn and "brewed" them in a variety of ways to affect various cures. The dew on the plants, as well as the manner in which they were compounded, gave these medicines a magical potency. To meet such a witch as she was returning from collecting ingredients meant that one was doomed to take on the affliction of the patient being treated by the hag. A similar belief, well represented in the folklore of the islanders, is the transference of disease from a human being to an animal that he has befriended earlier.

Christian and Pagan Reinterpretations

The four quarterly festivals of the Celts were: Imbolc, celebrated on February 1st, Beltaine on May 1st, Lughnasa on August 1st, and Samhain on November 1st.

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been blessed, to protect the beast from milk pilfering fairies and hag witches. Among the taboos associated with May Day are those prohibiting the visiting of wells before dawn and giving away fire; as regards the latter taboo, to do so is to "give away the luck of the farm" for a year. Flowers are placed on the altars of the two medieval churches in the early morning of May Day, and at one time garlands of flowers shaped like a horseshoe were hung on door posts for luck. Souls of the dead are especially feared on Allhallows' Eve, and are placated in the Catholic tradition a day later on the feast of All Souls. The telling of stories is tabooed on Allhallows' Day, and the fairies are said to spoil wild blackberries for future eating with their before dawn depredations. My wife and I invited in a small group of islanders to celebrate Halloween in 1959, and we spent much of the evening having our fortunes told by an old man as it was done on this night when he was a youth; he poured melted lead through a key handle into a pan of cold water and made his prognostications by interpreting the configurations formed by the quick hardening metal.

Whitsuntide is the week beginning with the feast of Pentecost, or Whitsunday, but in Inis Beag it extends to the feast of Corpus Christi and is known as the "kinkish time," when once again evil forces hold sway in the island. Usually the weather is "heavy and close" and very changeable, I was told, and people tend to be irritable and more depressed than usual. Men do not cut their hair, nor does anyone wash themselves, during these 12 days. Although the pookah is always a danger, it is more active at this time than during the rest of the year, and children and visitors are warned not to fall asleep outside or even to sit down on the ground unless accompanied by others, whose presence will thwart any attempts by the demon to twist their limbs. Some islanders will not undertake major tasks or decide on important issues during Whitsuntide. Whereas Christmas and Easter are considered "lucky times," the "kinkish time" is unlucky, and those born then may have the evil eye or be destined to die violently or take a life.

In 1960, Corpus Christi was celebrated June 16th—two days after pattern day and eight days before St. John's Eve. The latter is one of several midsummer celebrations reported from Ireland which mark the summer solstice. Boys gather wood and tend a huge bonfire lighted just after sunset on the common land of Inis Beag, and a few islanders carry coals from it to their homes and fields for protection and to guarantee the fertility of their wives and female livestock. A man complained to me that an infection in his son's finger was caused by the failure of the boy to procure a coal from the fire as instructed. On that evening, the folk congregate outside of their cottages and along the terrace roads to watch the hundreds of bonfires alight on the mainland coast. In the past, cows were driven between twin bonfires as at Beltaine, and barren women and those yet to marry leaped over the dying flames. One of the most brilliant satirical novels of Irish life—both cruel and insightful—is Tracy's *The Straight and Narrow Path*, the plot of which focuses on the difficulties encountered by a vacationing British anthropologist after he writes for a newspaper an eye witness account of nuns jumping a St. John's Eve bonfire.

The legends are several and varied in Ireland about the life of St. Martin (O Suilleabhain 1957:252–261). There is no saint of this name who is of Irish

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population in the presence of strangers, to conform to the nativistic and primitivistic stereotype. Probably the most robust of the two dozen islanders past the age of 70 years believes that he will live to be 100 years old, because he continues to be active physically and doesn't "worry about the health;" he accuses his fellows of "worrying themselves into the grave" over matters of body and soul.

The etiology of mental illness as conceived by the islanders is varied and embraces both natural and spiritual realms. "Insanity" stigmatizes the victim and his family, often for many generations, no matter what its cause, and as many psychotics are treated at home—hidden from the probing eyes of strangers—as are incarcerated in the mental institution serving the region of which Inis Beag is a part. Statistics on mental disorders are hard to come by because of the opprobrium attached to insanity, but at least eight of the folk were institutionalized for various periods between 1940 and 1965. Only one of these is a woman and none were violent prior to admission. Inheritance, inbreeding, and the menopause are the natural causes most widely accepted by the islanders, but some claim that heavy blows to the head, acute alcoholism, and even prolonged emotional tension—or "nerves"—can induce insanity. In explaining why a former Inis Beag curate was committed to a mental institution, an old man revealed what is probably the most significant cause of mental illness in Ireland when he said that the constant association of the priest with a pretty housekeeper "drove him mad from frustration;" he advocated that only elderly, plain-appearing women (who will not "gab" everything that they know to "our man") be hired for the task.

Supernatural forces are believed capable of causing not only mental illness, but most other maladies and injuries as well. Pagan dispensers of ill health are vengeful or capricious fairies, ghosts, and witches of the evil eye, while Catholicism provides an unpredictable Devil, a deity who punishes sinful thoughts and deeds in this world as well as in the next, and priests who in Inis Beag often have interpreted the boundaries of sin according to Irish and personal criteria. In the case of certain folk stricken with mental disorders, I have heard specific causes put forth to account for their condition: parents who are second cousins, the evil eye of a neighbor, punishment by God for a particular misdeed, and a priest's curse. A man who mistreated his aged bachelor uncle before his recent death now is haunted with the specter of being struck down from the grave with sickness, injury, or madness by the shade of the uncle seeking revenge. His despair and erratic behavior arouse little sympathy from his fellows, who await the day of reckoning. The stigma of mental illness arises from its designation as inheritable or a sign of the deity's displeasure, both of which may doom those of generations to come. There is a strong suspicion among the folk that other maladies which are deforming or leave physical aftereffects once cured can be transmitted through inheritance. In this category are two mongoloids, one dwarf, one epileptic, one person with goiter, one with a cleft palate, and one who has recovered from poliomyelitis. These disabilities also can stigmatize a family.

Probably the most infamous custom associated with the Irish is their excessive intake of intoxicating drink, and certainly Inis Beag islanders are no exception to the stereotype. Men drink far more than women, but even though the latter widely condemn the practice many are known to send their children to the pubs